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IN THE WOODS.

How the Wild Creatures are Spending the Winter.

BY WALTER LOUIS HAHN, PH. D.*

This is the season when the size of a man's bank account is most apt to determine his location. For in summer practically every one spends much of his time out of doors even though he may not go to Newport or Lenox. But in winter it is only the rich man who can escape the inclemency of the weather by taking a southern journey.

* "On May 31, 1911, a distressing accident occurred on St. Paul Island. Dr. Harry D. Chichester, assistant agent, and Dr. Walter L. Hahn, the naturalist on the seal islands, with their wives and a native, Neon Tetof, while sailing on the lagoon were unable to put about successfully in the high wind and by the capsizing of their boat were exposed to the ice-cold water for more than an hour. All were alive when rescued, and Mrs. Chichester and Mrs. Hahn, by the diligent efforts of the physician, were resuscitated. The native also survived, but Dr. Chichester and Dr. Hahn, necessarily left without medical attention for a time, succumbed to the effects of the exposure."

„Dr. Hahn entered upon his duties as naturalist in the fall of 1910. His training, wide field experience, and well-known ability and enthusiasm as a zoologist and practical business man were assurance that his appointment to the position of naturalist, just established, would prove a wise selection. His report, written up to the very day of his death, shows that he possessed a remarkably clear understanding of the problems with which he had to deal. Arriving at the islands August 23, 1910, he made daily observation and study of the seals and foxes throughout the fall, winter, and spring. He also gave attention to the birds and other animals on and about the islands, to the plants, and to meteorological phenomena, and gave much thought to the local educational problems and the intellectual and moral well-being of the natives, working out a system of education such as he believed best adapted to their needs."

* Report, *Alaska Fish and Fur Ind.* p. 90., (1912).

And while the members of the human family are either discussing the merits of Palm Beach and Ormond or else wondering how the coal bill is going to be met, the members of Nature's big family are also devising ways and means of spending the winter.

The birds are the aristocrats of the animal kingdom and they alone can afford to spend the winter under genial southern skies. But even some of their number must remain to look after business and they are not all the poor cousins either, if one may judge by appearances, for along with the sparrows and the somber colored Juncos who are holding a carnival among the briars, may be seen the scarlet crest of the Red-bird and the royal blue of the Jay.

Down in the woods in the whiteness of the winter midnight, the rabbits, those happy-go-lucky children of Nature's family, are having a feast and their choicest viands are the stems of the wild Hydrangea and the Arrow-wood, served with garnishings of ferns and a relish of sassafras. Little does Bunny care for cold or snow. But other dangers are abroad and sensitive nostrils warn him just in time that the cut-throat mink is near. He dashes away in terror, his hind legs over-reaching his front ones in his haste and leaving their imprints foremost in the snow.

The mink starts to follow but is unequal to the pace and turns his attention to smaller game. As he leaves the woods and crosses a field a little tunnel in the snow catches his eye. Can that be made by a mouse? he thinks, as he stops and sniffs at the snow, thrusts his nose into it and sniffs again. No! it was only a tiny shrew whose body is scarcely larger than a lady's thumb, besides it has some glands which give it an unsavory taste and smell and so the mink trots on still looking for signs of prey.

Here is another mark to be examined. The foot-prints are in pairs and there is a curious little streak in the snow behind them. That streak must be the mark of a tail and so these tracks could have been made only by a white-footed mouse for no other creature with feet so small and a tail so long is abroad on these cold winter nights. He would make a dainty morsel for a hungry mink but he has gone under that old stump and there he is safe for tonight.

Over in the woods on the other side of the field the snow

is thrown up and broken in a broad irregular line which shows that the earth under it is also upheaved. That must be the work of the pine mouse and here in the woods where the leaves are thick the ground is mellow and unfrozen and he should not be hard to catch. The mink waits only to make certain where the mouse has stopped, then as he sees the snow crust moving, he leaps to the spot, his paws work like lightning, and in an instant his teeth close upon the helpless victim. The warm blood tastes good and he would be content with that if food were plentiful but now after a three days fast the flesh can not be wasted and so the mouse is quickly devoured.

But we can not continue to follow the fortunes of the mink for there are other things of interest in the woods. The brook, too, contains a variety of animal life. The Johnny Darter and the Miller's Thumb dart through its swift current searching for food even though the waters be cold and their distant relatives, the cat-fish and the carp, may be lying torpid in the mud at the bottom of the river.

Under the rocks the larvae of the stone flies are hiding, together with leeches, sow-bugs and a host of other creatures. The dobson, choicest of bait for the black bass, is also here and those black lumps that seem to be glued to the rocks are water snails. Both they and the cray-fish which live here in the stream can remain active in the coldest weather when their relatives on the dry land must close their doors and stay in winter quarters.

Tadpoles swim about in the quiet pools which remain unfrozen but bury themselves in the mud as soon as ice begins to form. Their parents, the frogs, are hidden under the thick carpet of leaves which covers the floor of the forest or else they too are buried in the muddy bottoms of the ponds so deeply that the frost can not reach them but not so deeply that a week of warm weather will not bring them croaking into activity.

The animals with the long slender bodies that dart about and hide beneath the rocks are young salamanders, first cousins of the frogs. When they become fully grown they will leave the water and make their homes under rocks and decaying logs in the woods and fields. Most people who see them then will call them lizards but young lizards do not live in the water and they have scales like a snake instead of a soft moist skin such as the salamanders always have.

The strangest freaks in all of Nature's family are the insects. Last summer we saw myriads of moths, butterflies, beetles, gnats and countless other insects. Today as I walked through the woods the only insect I saw was a mosquito driven from its winter home in a hollow tree and walking stiffly about on the snow. Some of the others which last summer filled night and day with their incessant humming are also hidden away in hollow logs, under bark, in the caves, among the dead leaves—anywhere that will furnish sufficient room for a hiding place. They may be frozen stiff now but when the spring sun sends its reviving warmth into their retreats, life will flow through their bodies and they will be active once more. However, you might examine the whole world with a microscope and you would not find a single animal resembling some of those which were so abundant last summer. Has the whole race been killed? And is it to be numbered with those that have disappeared in the long gone geological ages? Wait and see. Nature is not so careless with her children. If the adult members of a species can not stand the rigors of winter, then other means for preserving the race must be provided. Somewhere, hidden away safely in a protected nook are some tiny eggs, the sole representatives of their species and when warm weather comes again these eggs will hatch and the bugs and butterflies, the caterpillars and moths, and the gnats and wasps will be as abundant as in former years.

CRITICAL NOTES ON NEW AND OLD GENERA OF PLANTS.—I.

BY J. A. NIEUWLAND.

GONOPYORUM A HOMONYM.

The name *Gonopyrum* F. and M. (1840)¹ is a homonym as there was an older *Gonopyros* Raf.,² (1828). The latter name differs from the other only in gender form of the word, and therefore reduces the other to synonymy according to the code rules.

¹ Fischer and Meyer ex C. A. Meyer in Mem. Acad. Petersb. Ser. VI., VI., p. 144, (1840).

² Rafinesque C. S. Med. Fl. I., p. 155, (1828).

³ Michaux, A., Fl. Bor. Am. II., p. 240, (1803).